

EPA News Highlights Week of 5/1-5/5

Washington Examiner: EPA's Pruitt, lawmakers recommit to public trust in East Chicago

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Friday joined Democrats and Republicans to reaffirm the agency's commitment to communities outside of Chicago hit by high levels of lead contamination. **Pruitt** had visited the Indiana city of East Chicago last month affected by contamination from a closed lead production facility owned by the firm U.S. Steel that had been designated a Superfund cleanup site by the agency in 2009... **Pruitt** had made visiting the city a top priority in a tour of the nation in April to promote the EPA's refocus on clean water and clean air.

WWMT West Michigan: One on one with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

Newschannel 3's political reporter Nick Minock got to sit down for an exclusive interview with administrator Scott Pruitt... "One hundred million dollars has come in to Flint from Washington D.C. to help with water infrastructure there with Flint. The State of Michigan as well has put in additional resources. We need to make sure, you know, in the future, and this is something as you look back at what happened with Flint, the EPA failed," **said Pruitt**.

The Hill: Ivanka Trump to meet with EPA chief ahead of Paris climate pact decision

Ivanka Trump is planning to meet next week with Environmental Protection Agency **Administrator Scott Pruitt** about the Paris climate change agreement. Ivanka, daughter and formal adviser to President Trump, will meet with **Pruitt** Tuesday, before a major meeting of top administration officials and Cabinet members to discuss the future of the Paris agreement, Axios reported Thursday. She wants her father to stay in the accord, as part of her push for action against climate change.

Politico: Trump advisers meeting on Tuesday to discuss Paris deal

President Donald Trump's top advisers are slated to meet Tuesday afternoon in a last-ditch effort to bridge the internal divide over the Paris climate change agreement, a White House official confirmed. Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and adviser, is scheduled to hold a separate meeting with EPA **Administrator Scott Pruitt** on Tuesday morning to discuss the climate deal, the official said... Tuesday's meetings could mark Trump advisers' last opportunity to make their case before the president weighs in.

E&E: Pruitt Preaches Cooperative Federalism for Disposal Plans

Late yesterday, EPA released a letter from **Pruitt** that encourages state governors to consider developing the permitting programs for what are technically known as "coal combustion residuals." Based on the concept of "cooperative federalism," **Pruitt** wrote, the agency has begun to craft guidance for review and approval of state applications that would "allow flexibility in individual permits in lieu of the national standards."

BNA: EPA Expects 'Swift' Review of States' Coal Ash Disposal Plans

State coal ash disposal programs will get a "swift" review once the agency figures out how to evaluate them, EPA head **Scott Pruitt** said. The Environmental Protection Agency announced May 1 that it is developing guidance for the approval of states' coal ash disposal permitting programs. State programs must be at least as protective as federal standards, but states have received little additional guidance. Utilities say the EPA's review is necessary because until now, citizen lawsuits have been the driving

Power Magazine: EPA Guidance on State Coal Ash Permit Programs Is Coming, Pruitt Says

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced it is working on guidance to give states the

flexibility in implementing programs for the management of coal combustion residuals (CCR) disposal. In an April 28 letter to state governors, **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt** described the agency's steps to implement a "new authority" for authorizing state CCR management permit programs under Section 2301 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements of the Nation Act (WIIN Act).

Daily Caller: Trumps EPA Weakens Obama Era Rules on Coal Ash Disposal

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working on giving states more flexibility in complying with former President Barack Obama's regulations targeting coal ash disposal. **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt** is working on creating "guidance" for states to set up their own programs to dispose of coal ash, as well as find beneficial uses for the byproduct. Critics believe the change would allow states to water down the full thrust of the Obama-era rules.

Washington Examiner: Pruitt Loosens Obamas Rules on Coal Waste

The Environmental Protection Agency advised states on Monday that it is working on a plan to give them more flexibility in complying with the Obama administration's rules for disposing of the ash waste from coal-fired power plants. **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt** sent a round of letters to states informing them that the agency is working on a "guidance" for states to set up their own permitting programs to regulate the safe disposal of coal ash and promote its beneficial uses.

Politico: Pruitt says EPA working on plans to approves states' coal ash programs

EPA is working on its procedures for reviewing and approving states' coal ash permitting programs, **Administrator Scott Pruitt** said in a Friday letter. A water infrastructure package that was signed into law in December included a bipartisan compromise on coal ash regulation that came in response to EPA's 2014 regulation on coal ash, a toxic byproduct of burning coal for electricity.

North Dakota Say Anything Blog: Trump's EPA Head Scott Pruitt to Governor Doug Burgum: "The Days of Coercive Federalism Are Over"

EPA head **Scott Pruitt**, in a March 30 letter attached to a recent press release, communicated to Burgum that North Dakota need not do anything to comply with the federal government's Clean Power Plan going forward since that plan has been stayed by the U.S. Supreme Court... But what's remarkable about this letter is how Pruitt closes. "The days of coercive federalism are over," **Pruitt** told Burgum, explaining in one sentence why Trump has been so popular in states like North Dakota.

Washington Times: Pruitt Op-Ed: EPA is putting American workers first

When President Trump came to EPA to sign an executive order ending the "war on coal," he was flanked by Pennsylvania coal miners. Hosting coal miners at EPA headquarters in Washington served as a stark contrast to the past administration, to be sure. President Trump's action was a moment in which a promise became an economic reality. As EPA Administrator, I immediately ordered my Agency to comply with the March 28 executive order, and signed four new rules, which included a review of the Clean Power Plan. Relief — and prosperity — is on the way.

E&E News: Pebble, EPA say settlement a week away

The company behind the Pebble mine project in Alaska and **U.S. EPA** yesterday told a federal judge they are just one week away from settling long-running litigation over Obama-era proposed mining restrictions. The agency and Pebble LP, a subsidiary of Canadian firm Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd., filed a joint motion in Alaska's U.S. District Court.

E&E News: Industry back in the black with EPA ready to help

Coal industry heavyweights are making money again with the Trump administration, and particularly U.S. EPA, firmly in their corner. Fresh out of bankruptcy, Peabody Energy Corp. — the world's largest private-sector coal mining firm — yesterday reported it made \$126.9 million in the first quarter of 2017. It lost \$165.1 million during the same period last year shortly before filing for bankruptcy... New **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt** has been put in charge of hacking back a slew of regulations that Trump feels are stifling business.

The Daily Caller: Trump's EPA: Coal Is A 'Safeguard' Against Attacks On Electric Grid

EPA administrator Scott Pruitt said Wednesday that removing coal production from the U.S. grid would make the country more vulnerable to terrorist attacks. "What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?" **Pruitt said** during a Fox News interview.

Washington Examiner: EPA's Pruitt warns: Less coal means nation more vulnerable to attack

"What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?" **Pruitt** asked in an interview with Fox Business's Varney and Co. "Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity. You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," **Pruitt** told the program's host Charles Payne.

E&E News: Pruitt: Paris deal is an 'America-second strategy'

Scott Pruitt doubled down yesterday on his assertion that the Paris climate agreement is a "bad deal" for the United States. The U.S. EPA administrator weighed in on the international climate accord in an interview on Fox Business, calling it an "America-second strategy." The comments came as news surfaced that opponents of the accord may be convincing President Trump to withdraw the United States from participation.

Politico: Pruitt: EPA considering expanding E15 sales

EPA is considering granting a year-round waiver to sell 15 percent ethanol fuel, **Administrator Scott Pruitt** said Wednesday, just one day after two farm-state senators said they might hold up repeal of an Obama regulation unless they got restrictions on the corn-based fuel eased. "We are looking at that internally, to allow E15 to be sold throughout the year," Pruitt told the National Association of Farm Broadcasting. "A national waiver, if you will. There is a statutory analysis that's ongoing and we're hopefully going to conclude that process very soon. I very much hope we can get there, but it's a matter of whether the statute permits it or not."

Politico: Pruitt on the Hill

Pruitt flooded the Hill for meetings Wednesday with key House and Senate lawmakers. Details were scarce on the confabs, but Pruitt's meetings included Energy and Commerce Chairman Greg Walden, E&C Environment Subcommittee Chairman John Shimkus, top EPA appropriator Ken Calvert, Mike Conaway and Richard Hudson, among others. ME spotted **Pruitt** walking quickly in the direction of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office around 4:30 p.m. ahead of a meeting. Other Senate stops included EPW Chairman John Barrasso and Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp.

The Hill: EPA chief: US needs coal to protect electric grid

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) argued Wednesday that using coal for electricity is necessary for the reliability of the electric grid. Speaking on Fox Business's "Varney & Co.," **Scott Pruitt** warned of the problems of relying too heavily on natural gas, which has increased in use

over the last decade as coal has fallen. **Pruitt** argued in part that cybersecurity concerns should inspire the country to maintain coal as a significant fuel source.

Fox Business: EPA's Pruitt: Paris Agreement was a Bad Business Deal for America

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on the Paris Climate Accord and Sir Richard Branson's comments about Trump's coal plan. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **administrator Scott Pruitt** on Wednesday said President Trump will soon make a decision on whether to pull out of the global Paris Climate Agreement signed in 2015. In an interview on the FOX Business Network's Varney & Co., the EPA administrator called the Paris Agreement "a bad deal for this country."

Politico: Pruitt: Coal needed to protect grid against attacks on gas infrastructure

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today said that coal played an important role in ensuring the U.S. power grid could function in the event of an attack on critical infrastructure. Speaking on Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co.," **Pruitt** said that coal-fired power plants, with stockpiles of coal reserves, could prove more reliable in a crisis than natural gas plants, which are largely fueled via pipelines that could more vulnerable to cyber or physical attacks.

Newsmax: EPA Head: Need Coal to Protect Electric Grid

The country needs to rely less on natural gas and more on coal to protect against cyber attacks on the electric grid, Environmental Protection Agency administrator **Scott Pruitt** said Wednesday. "Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity," **Pruitt** said in an interview on Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co." "You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," **Pruitt said.**

E&E News: Pruitt signals support for lifting ethanol restrictions

U.S. **EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt** suggested yesterday that he supports lifting seasonal restrictions on the sale of high-ethanol fuel, giving biofuel supporters a surprise boost on one of their top federal policy priorities. **Pruitt's** comments to the National Association of Farm Broadcasting that he hopes EPA can get to year-round sales of E15 fuel could reassure corn state senators who've tied the ethanol issue to their support for an unrelated measure on methane regulations that faces an uncertain vote next week.

Full Articles:

Washington Examiner

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/epas-pruitt-lawmakers-recommit-to-public-trust-in-east-chicago/article/2622262>

EPA's Pruitt, lawmakers recommit to public trust in East Chicago

By John Siciliano 5/5/17

Pruitt had visited the Indiana city of East Chicago last month affected by contamination from a closed lead production facility owned by the firm U.S. Steel that had been designated a Superfund cleanup site by the agency in 2009.

"The recent meeting in East Chicago signals our renewed commitment to restore public trust by improving communication and coordination and delivering real solutions for protecting health and public safety in the community, especially for the families impacted by the closure of West Calumet Housing Complex," read a joint statement by Pruitt and Democratic and Republican lawmakers, as well as Republican Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb.

Last year, residents in the city had to be evacuated from their homes due to high levels of lead in the water supply and soil. Pruitt had made visiting the city a top priority in a tour of the nation in April to promote the EPA's refocus on clean water and clean air.

Critics had underscored proposed cuts to the EPA budget as a serious problem in managing the cleanup effort, although Pruitt has fought those characterizations. The Trump budget blueprint calls for deep cuts at the agency across a number of programs.

"The painful personal stories of East Chicago residents will guide us as we chart a new path forward, and we are extremely grateful to each person who bravely shared their comments," according to the statement, signed by Sens. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., and Todd Young, R-Ind., as well as Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., and East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland.

EPA and Indiana environmental regulators "will continue efforts to remediate the Superfund site and work to ensure safe drinking water is provided through the city's public water system," the joint statement explained. "In addition, officials remain committed to investigating the sources, size, and scope of the lead contamination, as well as informing the public and quickly implementing remedies, if necessary, to ensure the residents of East Chicago have access to safe drinking water."

The actions are coupled with new state legislation that directs water testing in the city, coupled with a law requiring a plan by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission on how soon to expect lead drinking water pipes to be replaced.

"We will continue moving forward together until the job is done. Residents deserve nothing less," the letter read.

WWMT West Michigan

One on one with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

<http://wwmt.com/news/local/one-on-one-with-epa-administrator-scott-pruitt>

by Nick Minock|

Wednesday, May 3rd 2017

(NEWSCHANNEL 3) – The City of Flint continues to work to rebound from the water crisis.

In 2014 the city switched from the Detroit Water Department to using water from the Flint River to save money, but the water supply became contaminated with lead.

While more than 100 million dollars in federal and state money has been issued to address the crisis, President Donald Trump's new Environmental Protection Agency Administrator says the EPA should have acted much sooner.

Newschannel 3's political reporter Nick Minock got to sit down for an exclusive interview with administrator Scott Pruitt.

"I chatted with the President during the campaign trail," said Minock. "He said he would fix Flint quickly and effectively. So far in the first 100 days, what's the plan for Flint?"

"Quite a bit done as you know. One hundred million dollars has come in to Flint from Washington D.C. to help with water infrastructure there with Flint. The State of Michigan as well has put in additional resources. We need to make sure, you know, in the future, and this is something as you look back at what happened with Flint, the EPA failed," said Pruitt.

Many families in Flint agree that the EPA did fail.

As the EPA looks at safe drinking water rules, President Trump's EPA Administrator says the agency is talking internally about the situation in Flint so another water crisis doesn't happen.

The city needs to remove 6000 pipes by the end of 2017.

Less than 1000 have been done since the beginning of the Fast Start program last year.

In our exclusive interview with Administrator Scott Pruitt about the largest water crisis in Michigan, Pruitt put responsibility on Governor Rick Snyder.

"Going back to Flint, in closing, the families there can't drink their water, they have to use filtrations systems. Does this White House still have a commitment to the people of Flint?" asked Minock.

"When you look at 100 million dollars being allocated to a city of what, fifty-thousand people? And then you add another 100 million on top of that [from the state], to me it's not a matter of funding. It's matter of priority and having a plan. I called the Governor of Michigan with that \$100 million win from the EPA to the state of Michigan, I said is there a plan in place Governor to get Flint, Michigan cleaned up and ready to go? His answer was yes. This Administration has exorbitant commitment to make sure that Flint is addressed. We've shown that. Now it's up to the folks locally, you know that state of Michigan to make sure it happens. We are going to be right there with them because it matters to us. But this is a partnership and it's something we are going to focus on," said Pruitt.

You can see the full interview with Scott Pruitt by clicking here; <http://wwmt.com/news/raw/full-interview-epa-administrator-scott-pruitt>

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/331963-ivanka-trump-to-meet-with-epa-head-on-paris-climate-pact>

Ivanka Trump to meet with EPA chief ahead of Paris climate pact decision

By Timothy Cama 5/4/17 2:41 PM

Ivanka Trump is planning to meet next week with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt about the Paris climate change agreement.

Ivanka, daughter and formal adviser to President Trump, will meet with Pruitt Tuesday, before a major meeting of top administration officials and Cabinet members to discuss the future of the Paris agreement, Axios reported Thursday.

She wants her father to stay in the accord, as part of her push for action against climate change. Her husband and fellow Trump adviser Jared Kushner agrees with her, as do Secretary of State Rex

Tillerson and Energy Secretary Rick Perry. Pruitt and strategist Stephen Bannon are among those who want Trump to exit the pact, as he promised to during last year's campaign season. Pruitt called the agreement "just a bad deal" in a March interview.

The Tuesday meeting is part of a series that administration officials have had in recent weeks to try to resolve the rift over the agreement, which was reached in 2015 with nearly 200 nations on board. Under the pact, former President Barack Obama agreed to cut the United States' greenhouse gas emissions 26 percent to 28 percent by 2025. But the cuts are not binding.

Within the last week, White House officials have started to turn against staying in the pact. They're concerned that the agreement would allow Trump to reduce Obama's commitment, and that environmentalists could use the agreement in court to prevent Trump from rolling back climate regulations.

The White House didn't respond to a request for comment Thursday on Axios's report.

Politico

<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/04/trump-advisers-paris-climate-change-meeting-238001>

Trump advisers meeting on Tuesday to discuss Paris deal

By Andrew Restuccia and Annie Karni

5/4/17 4:11 PM

President Donald Trump's top advisers are slated to meet Tuesday afternoon in a last-ditch effort to bridge the internal divide over the Paris climate change agreement, a White House official confirmed. Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter and adviser, is scheduled to hold a separate meeting with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Tuesday morning to discuss the climate deal, the official said.

Ivanka Trump is said to support remaining in the agreement, while Pruitt has argued vehemently that the United States should withdraw, raising concerns that any decision to stay could complicate his efforts to undo former President Barack Obama's climate change regulations.

Tuesday's meetings could mark Trump advisers' last opportunity to make their case before the president weighs in. Trump has said he'll make a final decision this month, and sources said the verdict could come as soon as next week.

After a series of recent closed-door conversations, Trump's team remains divided on the issue. Several sources inside the White House said earlier this week that they believed the president is more likely to withdraw, noting that a series of legal concerns about the agreement had gained traction among key aides. But they cautioned that nothing has been finalized and several sources noted that Trump has been known to change his mind at the last minute, pointing to his change of heart on leaving NAFTA.

Axios first reported the news of Tuesday's meetings. Axios reported that Sen. Lisa Murkowski was slated to attend the meeting with Pruitt and Ivanka Trump. Murkowski told POLITICO she was not aware of the meeting being scheduled, but she hoped to sit down with Pruitt soon.

Trump is slated to make a final decision on whether to remain in the Paris agreement by the end of the

month, before a G-7 meeting in Italy.

E&E Daily

Pruitt preaches 'cooperative federalism' for disposal plans

Sean Reilly, E&E News reporter

Published: Tuesday, May 2, 2017

<https://www.eenews.net/eedaily/2017/05/02/stories/1060053885>

Congress is pressing U.S. EPA to come up with a fast-track process for approval of state coal ash disposal programs. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is meanwhile hastening to get the underlying review framework in place.

As part of a water projects bill signed into law last December, lawmakers authorized states to create their own permitting programs subject to EPA's consent. They followed up this week with language attached to a fiscal 2017 omnibus spending measure instructing the agency to "establish, as expeditiously as is practicable, streamlined procedures for prompt approval of those state programs."

Late yesterday, EPA released a letter from Pruitt that encourages state governors to consider developing the permitting programs for what are technically known as "coal combustion residuals."

Based on the concept of "cooperative federalism," Pruitt wrote, the agency has begun to craft guidance for review and approval of state applications that would "allow flexibility in individual permits in lieu of the national standards."

While Pruitt said he discussed plans for the proposed guidance with some state regulators at a conference last month, his letter did not give a timetable for release of that guidance and EPA has so far not unveiled a draft. The state of Georgia, however, has already submitted a plan that is under review, EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman said in an email this morning.

Coal ash, one of the nation's largest waste streams, is produced by coal-burning power plants. When EPA issued national disposal regulations in 2014, citizen lawsuits were initially the primary enforcement mechanism. That led the electric utility industry to push for state permitting programs as an option on the grounds that they would furnish more regulatory consistency.

The bill signed in December, known as the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act, gives EPA six months to approve a state's application. While the act allows states to diverge from the national standards, the alternative must be "at least as protective," according to the statute.

In an interview, Lisa Evans, an Earthjustice attorney who follows coal ash regulations, said EPA's emphasis in approving state programs should be "on doing it right [rather] than on doing it fast." Evans also questioned how open to the public Pruitt's approach would be.

"EPA appears to be going forward without writing regulations that would guide the process," she said. "This cannot be done ad hoc."

BNA

http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/1245/split_display.adp?fedfid=110594268&vname=denotallissues&wsn=4

EPA Expects 'Swift' Review of States' Coal Ash Disposal Plans

By Sylvia Carignan 5/3/17

State coal ash disposal programs will get a "swift" review once the agency figures out how to evaluate them, EPA head Scott Pruitt said.

The Environmental Protection Agency announced May 1 that it is developing guidance for the approval of states' coal ash disposal permitting programs. State programs must be at least as protective as federal standards, but states have received little additional guidance. Utilities say the EPA's review is necessary because until now, citizen lawsuits have been the driving enforcer of coal ash disposal regulations.

"We have been encouraging EPA to develop the framework for the submission of information from states to the agency," Jim Roewer, executive director of the Utility Solid Waste Activities Group, told Bloomberg BNA. "Certainly it is a step forward."

Bill Hayden, spokesman for Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality, told Bloomberg BNA it's too soon to tell if the state will make changes to its coal ash permit program to prepare for EPA approval.

Citizen Lawsuits

The state permits change the way coal ash disposal is enforced, John Ward, spokesman for the American Coal Ash Association, told Bloomberg BNA. Previously, citizen lawsuits were the main way to enforce coal ash disposal violations.

"Until EPA does this, and the states start submitting programs for approval, the de facto enforcement system is still citizen lawsuits," Ward said.

Congress told states to form their own programs for permitting the disposal of coal ash through the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016 (Public Law No. 114-322), which made an amendment to the Solid Waste Disposal Act.

The legislation did not set up an approval system or deadlines for states to submit their programs for approval.

The EPA has conditionally approved some states' programs, including Indiana's. The state has agreed to revise its coal ash regulations to be consistent with federal regulations by the end of 2018.

Power Magazine

EPA Guidance on State Coal Ash Permit Programs Is Coming, Pruitt Says

<http://www.powermag.com/epa-guidance-on-state-coal-ash-permit-programs-is-coming-pruitt-says/>

By: Sonal Patel, May 2, 2017

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced it is working on guidance to give states the flexibility in implementing programs for the management of coal combustion residuals (CCR) disposal.

In an April 28 letter to state governors, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt described the agency's steps to implement a "new authority" for authorizing state CCR management permit programs under Section 2301 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements of the Nation Act (WIIN Act).

Pruitt said that successful implementation of the EPA's authority "will require cooperation between EPA and state technical experts, the regulated community, and other stakeholders." He also encouraged state entities to continue discussions with the EPA on how they manage CCR, and to submit program applications "for approval in a timely manner."

Pruitt also said that the guidance is being developed based on priorities to promote "cooperative federalism." The agency discussed the draft guidance with "a number of state environmental directors" at the Environmental Council of States on April 7. It is also discussing its plans with "technical experts" at the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials.

The WIIN Act, which was signed by President Obama in December 2016, largely aims to restore watersheds, improve waterways and flood control, and improve drinking water infrastructure. Section 2301, which had the backing of utility groups, amends subtitle D of the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) to establish a permit program for CCR that states—after they gain the EPA's approval—may elect to administer in lieu of a federal regulatory program. The amendment also requires the EPA to review state programs at least once every 12 years, or on the request of a state.

But the amendment doesn't annul the Obama administration's December 2014-issued Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals from Electric Utilities final rule, which set the first-ever minimum federal standards for the disposal of coal ash under RCRA. While Section 2301 allows states to adopt different technical standards from the EPA's CCR rule, they must still be as protective as the federal rule. If they are not, the EPA has the authority to adopt a permit program in lieu of the federal rule.

"With the signing of the WIIN Act, EPA now has authority to enforce the implementation of the CCR Rule and an approved state or federal permit program," as attorneys from law firm Schiff and Hardin noted in December. "It is important to note that EPA's enforcement authority is in addition to the ability of environmental groups or states to bring citizen suits."

Daily Caller

<http://dailycaller.com/2017/05/02/trumps-epa-weakens-obama-era-rules-on-coal-ash-disposal/#ixzz4fwlasrxd>

Trumps EPA Weakens Obama Era Rules on Coal Ash Disposal

By: Chris, May 2, 2017

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working on giving states more flexibility in complying with former President Barack Obama's regulations targeting coal ash disposal.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is working on creating "guidance" for states to set up their own programs to dispose of coal ash, as well as find beneficial uses for the byproduct. Critics believe the change would allow states to water down the full thrust of the Obama-era rules.

"EPA expects that its new guidance will allow for the safe disposal and continued beneficial use of coal ash, while enabling states to decide what works best for their environment," Pruitt wrote Monday in a letter to several states.

Coal ash is a byproduct that manufacturers use to produce dry wall, bricks and concrete. Energy analysts and conservatives argue Obama's coal ash regulations are an aspect of the former president's "war on

coal” because of the high cost associated with complying with the rule.

“EPA continues to support the environmentally sound recycling of coal ash,” Pruitt said, adding that enforcement for the rules must be put in the hands of state regulators, or “those who best know the needs of local communities.”

Pruitt’s move to lessen the restrictive rules comes less than a week after a federal court agreed to President Donald Trump’s request to pause litigation over the Obama administration’s Clean Power Plan (CPP), which was intended to limit carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants.

The Circuit Court did not issue a decision on the legality of the rule, which was stayed by the Supreme Court last year. Obama crafted the rule chiefly to address carbon emissions that some scientists believe are causing man-made global warming

Government lawyers asked to pause the case in March in response to Trump’s executive order instructing federal agencies to reconsider Obama’s climate policies. Activists urged the court to reject the request.

Trump’s judicial victory over the CPP is part of a rousing fight the president has waged against Obama’s rules. Trump also recently signed a bill to repeal an Obama-era stream regulation that critics say would have locked up 64 percent of U.S. coal reserves.

Trump made nixing his predecessor’s environmental rules a pillar of his presidential campaign.

Washington Examiner

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/pruitt-loosens-obamas-rules-on-coal-waste/article/2621817>

Pruitt Loosens Obamas Rules on Coal Waste

By: John Siciliano | May 1, 2017

The Environmental Protection Agency advised states on Monday that it is working on a plan to give them more flexibility in complying with the Obama administration's rules for disposing of the ash waste from coal-fired power plants.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt sent a round of letters to states informing them that the agency is working on a "guidance" for states to set up their own permitting programs to regulate the safe disposal of coal ash and promote its beneficial uses.

Advocates of the rules have said the change will weaken the coal regulations at the federal level by allowing states to dictate the terms of compliance as long as they have rules that are similar to EPA's.

"EPA expects that its new guidance will allow for the safe disposal and continued beneficial use of coal ash, while enabling states to decide what works best for their environment," the agency said. Coal ash is used in a number of products for the building industry, such as dry wall, bricks and concrete.

The Obama coal ash regulations have made it increasingly difficult and costly to handle the waste from coal power plants, prompting critics to include them in Obama's "war on coal."

"EPA continues to support the environmentally sound recycling of coal ash," Pruitt said. "Through the

authority granted by Congress in the [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation] Act, EPA is issuing this guidance to promote the swift submission and review of state permit programs, make state and federal management of coal ash more consistent, and place enforcement in the hands of state regulators – those who best know the needs of local communities."

The water infrastructure bill that was passed last year authorizes the states to set up their own permit programs for coal ash permit. Without the changes, the states would be subject to civil litigation from environmental groups as the only enforcement mechanism.

Politico

<https://www.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2017/05/pruitt-says-epa-working-on-plans-to-approve-states-coal-ash-programs-087087>

Pruitt says EPA working on plans to approves states' coal ash programs

By: Alex Guillen 5/1/17, 5:17PM

EPA is working on its procedures for reviewing and approving states' coal ash permitting programs, Administrator Scott Pruitt said in a Friday [letter](#).

A water infrastructure package that was signed into law in December included a bipartisan compromise on coal ash regulation that came in response to EPA's 2014 regulation on coal ash, a toxic byproduct of burning coal for electricity. The [compromise](#) shifted permitting responsibilities to the states, which must first get EPA approval of their programs' broad contours, while EPA gained more enforcement powers and other concessions.

EPA is currently working on the needed guidance for states to seek such approval, Pruitt wrote in a letter to Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval.

"EPA has started developing guidance for states about how EPA expects to review and approve state applications to operate permit programs and allow flexibility in individual permits in lieu of the national standards," Pruitt wrote.

The topic was discussed at a recent gathering of state environmental officials, and the agency plans to go into technical detail with the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials, Pruitt added.

WHAT'S NEXT: EPA will develop draft guidance and may seek public input before issuing final guidance on how it will review state submissions.

North Dakota Say Anything Blog

Trump's EPA Head Scott Pruitt to Governor Doug Burgum: "The Days of Coercive Federalism Are Over"
May 2, 2017 | by Rob Port

<https://www.sayanythingblog.com/entry/trumps-epa-head-scott-pruitt-governor-doug-burgum-days-coercive-federalism/>

Back during last year's election I had lunch with then-gubernatorial candidate Doug Burgum and we talked about then-presidential candidate Donald Trump.

At the time a lot of people, including this observer, were surprised at Burgum's fulsome endorsement of

Trump's candidacy. He was (and still is) a hugely controversial and divisive figure even among Republicans. Burgum explained the endorsement to me by saying that Trump, whatever his faults, would be a better candidate for North Dakota than Hillary Clinton.

"It's a no brainer," Burgum told me.

I wasn't so sure, and I harped on Burgum for his endorsement back when Trump was still in a competitive primary, but turns out he was right.

I was wrong.

I can illustrate how right Burgum, now our Governor, was with a letter a member of Trump's candidate just sent him.

EPA head Scott Pruitt, in a March 30 letter attached to a recent press release, communicated to Burgum that North Dakota need not do anything to comply with the federal government's Clean Power Plan going forward since that plan has been stayed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

That's good news for our state since the Clean Power Plan has always seemed less a move toward good environmental stewardship than a vehicle for the Obama administration's enmity toward coal-fired power. It's politics, in other words, not good policy.

But what's remarkable about this letter is how Pruitt closes. "The days of coercive federalism are over," Pruitt told Burgum, explaining in one sentence why Trump has been so popular in states like North Dakota.

A remarkable couple of sentences, and a stunning departure from the approach of the Obama administration which sought to impose on the states that President's ideological views on energy development costs be damned.

The promise of this sort of sea change in federal regulation is a big reason why Trump won the election. It's why astute state leaders like Burgum looked past Trump's deep and numerous flaws to support him anyway.

North Dakota has done well under Trump. He cleared the political obstacles around the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipeline projects. He's rolled back numerous regulations which bedeviled those working in energy and agriculture, our state's biggest industries. This has made him very popular in North Dakota.

I have to imagine that other states which rely on industry – those swing states like Wisconsin and Michigan and Pennsylvania which delivered Trump his victory in the Electoral College – are feeling similarly vindicated.

Washington Times

EPA is putting American workers first

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/may/1/epa-is-putting-american-workers-first/>

By EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

Monday, May 1, 2017

When President Trump came to EPA to sign an executive order ending the “war on coal,” he was flanked by Pennsylvania coal miners. Hosting coal miners at EPA headquarters in Washington served as a stark contrast to the past administration, to be sure.

President Trump’s action was a moment in which a promise became an economic reality. As EPA Administrator, I immediately ordered my Agency to comply with the March 28 executive order, and signed four new rules, which included a review of the Clean Power Plan. Relief — and prosperity — is on the way.

The “war on coal” stemmed from the previous administration’s regulations aimed at removing coal from our nation’s energy mix. This approach, sanctioned by EPA and other agencies, divided Americans and strengthened Washington’s grip on our economy. Thankfully, President Trump has made clear: The regulatory assault on American workers is over. We should not have to choose between supporting jobs and supporting the environment.

Now, opponents of President Trump’s new executive order claim that this action means that our federal government is turning its back on a clean environment and regulation altogether. This argument is wrong.

First, the Clean Power Plan was never implemented, and was unable to do a single thing for our environment. Twenty-seven states sued, recognizing the threat this regulation posed to their economies and the rule of law. The Supreme Court granted a stay to halt implementation of the Clean Power Plan.

Rather than take its lumps, the Obama administration still demanded compliance from the states, claiming that the stay was only temporary (a technique that was frequently used by the Agency to extract compliance during litigation). The result was lost jobs and an uncertain regulatory environment, without any environmental gain to show for it.

Second, the Clean Power Plan was expected to yield very little for what it cost the American taxpayer. For the price of American jobs, EPA had promised a reduction of sea level rise by the thickness of two sheets of paper and reduction of atmospheric CO₂ concentrations by 0.2 percent by 2100, according to an analysis by the National Economic Research Associates. Emissions growth in China and India, of course, would continue unchecked. This plan put America last.

Third, congressional testimony by my predecessor, former Administrator Gina McCarthy, made it clear that the goal of the Clean Power Plan was far less about achieving a measurable result than it was about providing leadership in the world. The federal government sought to kneecap American workers, while countries like India and China were not held to the same rules.

Americans who want a healthy and clean environment expect lawful, effective and economically sound regulation — the Clean Power Plan failed on all three counts. EPA can and should now focus on getting real results in the fight for clean air, land and water.

President Trump made it clear that we should put America first. We are not going to allow EPA to pick winners and losers through regulation. EPA should work within the framework that Congress has established. And we should provide regulatory certainty and write rules that make sense for the states and the businesses they affect.

The “war on coal” is over. Now EPA can focus on its mission and deliver real results.

Former Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt was sworn in as the 14th Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency on Feb. 17, 2017.

E&E News

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/05/05/stories/1060054119>

Pebble, EPA say settlement a week away

By Dylan Brown 5/5/17

The company behind the Pebble mine project in Alaska and U.S. EPA yesterday told a federal judge they are just one week away from settling long-running litigation over Obama-era proposed mining restrictions.

The agency and Pebble LP, a subsidiary of Canadian firm Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd., filed a joint motion in Alaska's U.S. District Court.

"The parties have identified a likely framework for settlement and request a short, one-week extension of the current stay to allow the parties the time necessary to finalize the agreement and obtain the required approvals," it states.

EPA previously denied that it colluded with anti-mining activists on proposed Clean Water Act mining restrictions in the salmon-rich Bristol Bay area.

Now Pebble CEO Tom Collier said the two sides have found common ground under new EPA boss Scott Pruitt about the future of environmental reviews for the project.

"On that basis, we anticipate achieving a resolution to these matters next week," Collier said.

With opposition already bracing for lifting the restrictions, one of the mine's top critics lost her job leading an Alaska Native group this week because she took a position on a new Pebble advisory committee.

The board of directors for Nunamta Aulukestai, a nonprofit collective of tribal officials from around Bristol Bay, removed longtime Executive Director Kimberly Williams after she notified them she would soon be stepping down to join the committee.

The group accused Pebble of buying off Williams with a stipend, travel compensation and other benefits, but Williams told local radio station KDLG that her opinion was unchanged against the mine.

Pebble declined to confirm the existence of any advisory committee, but spokesman Mike Heatwole told the *Alaska Dispatch News* that announcements on several initiatives will be coming soon.

Natural Resources Defense Council Western Director Joel Reynolds told the *Dispatch News* he, too, was offered a spot on the committee but refused because the plan is "uniquely reckless."

E&E News

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/05/05/stories/1060054138>

Industry back in the black with EPA ready to help

By Dylan Brown 5/5/17

Coal industry heavyweights are making money again with the Trump administration, and particularly U.S. EPA, firmly in their corner.

Fresh out of bankruptcy, Peabody Energy Corp. — the world's largest private-sector coal mining firm — yesterday reported it made \$126.9 million in the first quarter of 2017. It lost \$165.1 loss during the same period last year shortly before filing for bankruptcy.

The earnings report came as the president and members of the administration keep promising to not only relax regulations on coal but also boost its prospects.

The No. 2 coal producer in the United States, Arch Coal Inc., which also successfully restructured this past year, reported \$51.7 million in first-quarter net income after hemorrhaging \$206.7 million during the first three months of last year.

After a half-decade in free fall, and much shrinking, coal companies believe they have turned a corner. "These results demonstrate the positive momentum in our business and the potential we have to elevate our performance still further as the industry continues to evolve," Arch CEO John Eaves said in a statement.

The uptick started before President Trump took office, but ebullient mining companies have praised Trump, whose administration's message to the industry has repeatedly been that "the war on coal is over" ([Greenwire](#), May 2).

New EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has been put in charge of hacking back a slew of regulations that Trump feels are stifling business.

Peabody stated that it "remains very encouraged by priorities and strong actions" from Trump, including killing the Interior Department's Stream Protection Rule and working to unwind EPA's Clean Power Plan.

Speaking at the Eastern Fuel Buyers Conference yesterday, EPA Senior Policy Adviser Mandy Gunasekara made it clear that her agency is ready to help coal companies at a policy level, according to SNL Energy.

"I'm here to talk to you to make sure what we're doing in D.C. is beneficial for you," she said to the crowd at the Disney Yacht Club in Orlando, Fla. "If it's not working, I want to hear about it so that we can work it out."

According to SNL, Gunasekara said that while career staff will be included, there will be room for expertise beyond EPA officials who generally lean Democratic or have environmental sympathies.

Lamenting environmental groups' success in front of friendly judges, Gunasekara said Pruitt will prioritize keeping decisions out of the courts.

In response, Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said, "Scott Pruitt and his hand-picked staff are no longer even lying about it: They are clear that their only priority is to help corporate polluters."

He said in a statement, "The mission of the EPA is to safeguard human health and the environment, not

to coddle the coal industry."

In April, Pruitt buoyed coal industry spirits with a visit to the Harvey mine in Pennsylvania, owned by CNX Coal Resources LP, which has ties to Consol Energy Inc. (*Climatewire*, April 14).

CNX Coal told investors this week it is looking for even more help from Pruitt after "near-record sales and production volumes" in 2017's first quarter.

"We discussed several issues that he admittedly did not have full understanding of, but he instructed his staff to bone up on immediately," said Jim McCaffrey, senior vice president of energy marketing.

"And we expect and anticipate that stuff — like technology, for example — and we expect and anticipate that that will bear some fruit. He was also asking questions about some immediate things that he could deliver. ... He insisted he would deliver those."

The Daily Caller

<http://dailycaller.com/2017/05/04/trumps-epa-coal-is-a-safeguard-against-attacks-on-electric-grid/>

Trump's EPA: Coal Is A 'Safeguard' Against Attacks On Electric Grid

By Chris White 5/4/17 11:12 AM

EPA administrator Scott Pruitt said Wednesday that removing coal production from the U.S. grid would make the country more vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

"What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?" Pruitt said during a Fox New interview.

His comments come after Energy Secretary Rick Perry directed the agency to undergo a 60-day review of the energy grid in April to determine if green energy subsidies are hurting more reliable forms of energy like natural gas and coal.

Perry's review seeks to evaluate to what extent regulatory burdens, subsidies, and tax policies "are responsible for forcing the premature retirement of baseload power plants." Pruitt's decision to weigh in on energy grid issues is another unique difference between the Trump administration and its Democratic predecessor.

"Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity. You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," he added.

Pruitt's position is not unprecedented. The 2016 Republican National Convention, for instance, proposed the idea of transitioning the EPA into a bipartisan commission akin to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, an agency responsible for approving improvements and maintaining the country's electrical grid.

DOE's study is being conducted as the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, a grid watchdog group, focuses on determining the vulnerabilities of an electric grid completely dependent on solar power, wind power, and natural gas.

The group maintains that holding a surplus of coal on power plant premises could stave off possible

brownouts or possible attacks. It also reported last year that natural gas and renewable energy technology has benefits but is also problematic in maintaining a reliable source of energy.

Natural gas is a just-in-time resource, the group noted at the time of a 2016 report, that must be transported via pipeline. Pipelines cannot always keep up with demand if there is a spike in electricity consumption during a bout of extreme hot or cold weather, it noted.

Government officials' concerns stem chiefly from evidence showing Europe and other country's reliance on solar and wind power have caused a series of rolling blackouts in Germany and South Australia.

South Australia, for instance, has plenty of coal and natural gas reserves, but, thanks to the country's environmental movement, many of the state's most reliable coal-powered plants have been shuttered, which is forcing solar and wind power to make up for the deficit.

The state's growing reliance on solar and wind power "has not only led to a series of technical challenges" but "also increased wholesale price volatility as the state rebalances its supply from dispatchable plant to intermittent generation," Australia's Energy Council noted last year.

Nearly 25 percent of homes in the state currently have solar panels installed, and the state gets 41 percent of its power from wind, solar and other green sources. Officials believe fluctuations in the supply of wind power have caused rolling brownouts and blackouts in South Australia.

Germany, which is almost completely reliant on solar and wind, managed to stave off a major blackout in January when German energy suppliers recommissioned its last remaining coal power plants at the last moment.

The country's power grid was strained to the limit and was in jeopardy of going offline entirely, triggering national blackouts if just one power plant had gone offline. Germany was forced to recommission the plants to keep energy flowing.

Washington Examiner

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/epas-pruitt-warns-less-coal-means-nation-more-vulnerable-to-attack/article/2622067>

EPA's Pruitt warns: Less coal means nation more vulnerable to attack

By John Siciliano 5/3/17, 6:48PM

"What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?" Pruitt asked in an interview with Fox Business's Varney and Co.

"Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity. You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," Pruitt told the program's host Charles Payne.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the congressionally mandated grid watchdog that develops mandatory reliability standards for utilities, is focused on examining the challenge faced by an electric system dominated by natural gas and more renewables.

The group said in its 2016 reliability report that there are advantages to having tons of coal on site at a power plant to maintain the power supply, whereas natural gas is a just-in-time resource that must be transported via pipeline. Pipelines cannot always keep up with demand if there is a spike in electricity consumption during a bout of extreme hot or cold weather.

NERC works with the nation's lead grid regulator, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, in evaluating those issues and approving standards to prevent blackouts and brownouts.

"I mean, it's a smart strategy for this country to invest in technology and innovation, burn coal, burn natural gas, use renewables, make sure we advance nuclear," Pruitt said. "But it truly needs to be a part of the fuel diversity with utilities across the country."

Pruitt's statements show a willingness to wade into matters regarding the electric grid, which is an area the EPA does not directly oversee but has influenced immensely by its regulations on coal plants.

Pruitt's remarks come as Energy Secretary Rick Perry is conducting a grid study that would address some of the concerns the EPA chief raised.

FERC has principal oversight over the wholesale electric and natural gas markets and routinely examines those matters with NERC.

Republicans had blasted the Obama administration's EPA for not adequately consulting with FERC in developing its climate change regulations, because of the impact the rules would have on the grid.

The platform from the 2016 Republican National Convention even proposed the idea of transforming the EPA into a bipartisan commission akin to FERC or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Both commissions are formed by equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats with the chairman being of the same party as the president.

E&E News

<https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/2017/05/04/stories/1060054043>

Pruitt: Paris deal is an 'America-second strategy'

By Niina Heikkinen 5/4/17

Scott Pruitt doubled down yesterday on his assertion that the Paris climate agreement is a "bad deal" for the United States.

The U.S. EPA administrator weighed in on the international climate accord in an interview on Fox Business, calling it an "America-second strategy." The comments came as news surfaced that opponents of the accord may be convincing President Trump to withdraw the United States from participation.

Pruitt has repeatedly criticized the Paris Agreement, saying the United States has made significant progress in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, while other major polluters, like China and India, have until 2030 to meet their emissions targets. Speaking on "Varney & Co." yesterday, Pruitt criticized the costs of meeting national emissions targets and emphasized that private businesses have achieved significant emissions reductions on their own.

"What's right about this issue is making sure we have the international discussions with respect to how good a job we are doing across the globe with respect to our CO2 footprint. What's wrong with Paris it was a bad deal for this country," he said.

Trump campaigned on a promise to "cancel" the Paris Agreement but has not yet ruled on whether to actually do so. Top administration officials are split over whether to exit, with Pruitt joining White House chief strategist Steve Bannon in urging Trump to ditch the deal. Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump is leading the contingent of officials pressing to remain in the deal.

Pruitt said the president would be making a decision "very soon" about continued U.S. participation in the climate accord.

The EPA administrator had spent much of the day meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill, discussing state environmental priorities and the agency's new focus on "cooperative federalism," according to agency spokesman Lincoln Ferguson.

Pruitt's meetings included sit-downs with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), as well as several other members of Congress. The conversations follow the administrator's recent tour touting his "Back to Basics" agenda, which included a visit to a Pennsylvania coal mine and Missouri power plant.

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.) said he and Pruitt discussed community concerns about the costs of meeting water quality standards in rural communities, as well as the Portland Harbor Superfund site, while Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.) said he focused on the "advancement and improvement of North Carolina energy and infrastructure."

Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.) said he looks forward to working with Pruitt, following their meeting yesterday afternoon.

"It's exciting to have an EPA administrator who recognizes that environmental protection and economic growth are not mutually exclusive goals," he said in a statement.

Politico

<https://www.politicopro.com/energy/story/2017/05/pruitt-epa-considering-year-round-e15-waiver-156297>

Pruitt: EPA considering expanding E15 sales

By Eric Wolff 5/3/17, 5:13PM

EPA is considering granting a year-round waiver to sell 15 percent ethanol fuel, Administrator Scott Pruitt said Wednesday, just one day after two farm-state senators said they might hold up repeal of an Obama regulation unless they got restrictions on the corn-based fuel eased.

"We are looking at that internally, to allow E15 to be sold throughout the year," Pruitt told the National Association of Farm Broadcasting. "A national waiver, if you will. There is a statutory analysis that's ongoing and we're hopefully going to conclude that process very soon. I very much hope we can get there, but it's a matter of whether the statute permits it or not."

The Clean Air Act prevents retailers in some parts of the country from selling E15 fuel during the

summer. Ethanol producers and trade associations have been asking EPA to grant a waiver to allow year-round sale of E15, which they believe would help increase sales of ethanol and relieve pressure on the Renewable Fuel Standard. Oil refiners generally oppose the move.

There has been dispute within the agency and even among biofuels advocates over whether the law allows EPA to grant such a waiver, or if Congress must alter the Clean Air Act.

On Tuesday, Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) and [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) threatened to block a resolution to overturn an Obama-era methane rule unless Congress would allow the sale of 15 percent ethanol fuel blends year-round.

Meanwhile, ethanol groups are hopeful they will get the E15 policy changed.

"We are optimistic that under Administrator Pruitt's leadership, EPA will take action to eliminate this needless obstacle to growth in the ethanol and agriculture industries," Geoff Cooper, senior vice president for the Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol producers trade group, said in a statement. Pruitt also said EPA is on track to publish final Renewable Fuel Standard volume mandates by the November deadline, and that his agency is still reviewing comments on whether to change which companies are obliged to comply with the program.

WHAT'S NEXT: If EPA decides to grant the waiver, it will likely issue a proposed decision.

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/331819-epa-chief-us-needs-coal-to-protect-electric-grid>

EPA chief: US needs coal to protect electric grid

By Timothy Cama 5/3/17, 5:02PM

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) argued Wednesday that using coal for electricity is necessary for the reliability of the electric grid.

Speaking on Fox Business's "Varney & Co.," [Scott Pruitt](#) warned of the problems of relying too heavily on natural gas, which has increased in use over the last decade as coal has fallen.

Pruitt argued in part that cybersecurity concerns should inspire the country to maintain coal as a significant fuel source.

"Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity. You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," Pruitt told host Charles Payne.

"What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?" he asked.

"I mean, it's a smart strategy for this country to invest in technology and innovation, burn coal, burn natural gas, use renewables, make sure we advance nuclear. But it truly needs to be a part of the fuel diversity with utilities across the country."

Earlier in his appearance, Pruitt boasted about the United States reducing its greenhouse gas emissions without regulations like the Clean Power Plan. Natural gas replacing coal over the last decade is the

primary reason for that reduction.

“We’re leading the world already with our CO2 footprint,” he said. “What’s interesting about the reduction of our CO2 footprint is that it’s been accomplished without any government mandate.”

Pruitt and President Trump have worked on numerous fronts in recent months to push policies that help coal, mainly through working to repeal regulations that harmed the industry.

Trump has repeatedly promised, through his policies, to bring back the coal industry.

“You know what this says?” Trump said to a coal miner in March before signing an executive order to start repealing Obama’s climate regulations. “You’re going back to work.”

Separately, Energy Secretary Rick Perry has commissioned a study to examine whether renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power threaten grid reliability at the expense of coal and nuclear.

Fox Business

EPA's Pruitt: Paris Agreement was a Bad Business Deal for America

<http://video.foxbusiness.com/v/5420217478001/?#sp=show-clips>

Published May 03, 2017

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on the Paris Climate Accord and Sir Richard Branson's comments about Trump's coal plan.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator Scott Pruitt on Wednesday said President Trump will soon make a decision on whether to pull out of the global Paris Climate Agreement signed in 2015.

In an interview on the FOX Business Network’s Varney & Co., the EPA administrator called the Paris Agreement “a bad deal for this country.”

“What Paris represents is an American second strategy. We already are at pre-1994 levels with respect to our CO2 footprint and when America went to Paris, Russia, China, India, all contributed zero to the climate action fund. And as far as India and China are concerned, they didn’t have to take any steps to address CO2 until year 2030. That’s a bad business deal for this country,” he said.

Pruitt said the United States has been leading the world at reducing our CO2 footprint through innovation and technology without any government mandate.

“When you look at what’s happened, you have technology and innovation, invested by the private sector, reducing our CO2 footprint. So, we need to tell our story. We don’t need to be apologetic about our position and we need to exit Paris,” he said.

The EPA administrator weighed in on billionaire Sir Richard Branson calling out Trump on his coal plan.

“I can’t think of anything more stupid than to talk about bringing coal back,” Branson said during an interview with Washington Post Live.

Pruitt called Branson's comments "dead wrong" and said the United States is blessed with its resources.

"It's a smart strategy for this country to invest in technology and innovation. Burn coal, burn natural gas, use renewables, make sure we advance nuclear, but it truly needs to be a part of the field diversity with the utilities across the country," he said.

Politico

<https://www.politicopro.com/energy/whiteboard/2017/05/pruitt-coal-needed-to-protect-grid-against-attacks-on-gas-infrastructure-087215>

Pruitt: Coal needed to protect grid against attacks on gas infrastructure

By Alex Guillen 5/3/17, 1:21PM

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt today said that coal played an important role in ensuring the U.S. power grid could function in the event of an attack on critical infrastructure.

Speaking on Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co.," Pruitt said that coal-fired power plants, with stockpiles of coal reserves, could prove more reliable in a crisis than natural gas plants, which are largely fueled via pipelines that could more vulnerable to cyber or physical attacks.

"You need solid hydrocarbons on site that you can store, so when peak demand rises you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," Pruitt said. "What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've converted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?"

Pruitt added that a "smart strategy" would invest in coal, gas, renewables and nuclear, "but it truly needs to be part of fuel diversity for utilities across the country."

Newsmax

<http://www.newsmax.com/Politics/scott-pruitt-epa-electric-grid-coal/2017/05/03/id/787980/>

EPA Head: Need Coal to Protect Electric Grid

By Greg Richter

Wednesday, 03 May 2017 07:01 PM

The country needs to rely less on natural gas and more on coal to protect against cyber attacks on the electric grid, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Scott Pruitt said Wednesday.

"Utility companies across this country need fuel diversity," Pruitt said in an interview on Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co."

"You need solid hydrocarbons on-site that you can store, so when peak demand rises, you've got solid hydrocarbons to draw on," Pruitt said. "What would happen if we had an attack on our infrastructure when you've diverted to natural gas almost exclusively and you don't have coal there as a safeguard to preserve the grid?"

Pruitt told guest host Charles Payne it is a smart strategy to invest in technology and innovation, burn coal, burn natural gas, use renewables and advance nuclear power, "But it truly needs to be a part of the fuel diversity with utilities across the country."

Arguing that the United States should exit the Paris climate accord, Pruitt said America already is leading the world with its CO2 footprint without regulations such as the Clean Power Plan.

"What's interesting about the reduction of our CO2 footprint is that it's been accomplished without any government mandate," he said.

President Donald Trump has vowed since the campaign to bring coal production back following what Republicans termed a "war on coal" by the Obama White House.

E&E News

Pruitt signals support for lifting ethanol restrictions

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/05/04/stories/1060054068>

Marc Heller and Kellie Lunney, E&E News reporters

Published: Thursday, May 4, 2017

U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt suggested yesterday that he supports lifting seasonal restrictions on the sale of high-ethanol fuel, giving biofuel supporters a surprise boost on one of their top federal policy priorities.

Pruitt's comments to the National Association of Farm Broadcasting that he hopes EPA can get to year-round sales of E15 fuel could reassure corn state senators who've tied the ethanol issue to their support for an unrelated measure on methane regulations that faces an uncertain vote next week (E&E News PM, May 3).

"We are looking at that internally to allow E15 to be sold throughout the year. A national waiver, if you will," Pruitt told the broadcasters' group at its annual spring meeting in Washington.

E15 is 15 percent ethanol, mainly made from corn, and 85 percent gasoline.

"There is a statutory analysis that's ongoing, and we're hopefully going to conclude that process very soon," Pruitt said, referring to his agency's review of the seasonal limits. "I very much hope we can get there, but it's a matter of whether the statute permits it or not."

Most fuel sold in the United States is 10 percent ethanol. Federal regulations restrict sales of E15 and higher-ethanol fuels between June and September because of concerns about ozone, but the biofuel industry says that E15 is less volatile and that the rules are outdated.

Ethanol promoters quickly disseminated Pruitt's comments, which contrast with a perception in the industry that the former Oklahoma attorney general isn't likely to support expansion of ethanol, which competes against oil and gas.

"We are encouraged to hear that EPA is actively looking at how to rectify the [Reid vapor pressure] barrier administratively," said Geoff Cooper, senior vice president of the Renewable Fuels Association, in a statement. "We continue to believe the Agency has the authority to quickly remove this arcane and burdensome regulatory barrier, which offers absolutely no environmental benefit and is costing consumers billions at the pump. We are optimistic that under Administrator Pruitt's leadership, EPA will take action to eliminate this needless obstacle to growth in the ethanol and agriculture industries."

Pruitt's comments come as a few corn-state senators push to attach an E15 waiver on any legislation they can. They failed in an effort to put it in a spending bill for fiscal 2017 and have held out support for another bill — a repeal of an Obama administration rule regulating methane release on public lands — while talks on the issue continue.

Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.), who has been involved in amassing support for the measure to repeal the methane rule, said discussions are ongoing with supporters of looser E15 sale restrictions to find the right legislative vehicle for the waiver.

But that vehicle is not the Congressional Review Act resolution on the methane rule, Hoeven said. "We can't tie it into the CRA because there's really no way to do that. I think it's got to be separate."

Hoeven, however, said Republicans were willing to work with those corn state senators on getting the E15 waiver, which he called "common sense."

Two corn state senators dodged questions yesterday on the methane rule vote and the potential ethanol complication. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) said she had no comment on the issue, while Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) said she had not yet decided how to vote on the methane resolution.

To ethanol advocates, the E15 waiver has become the top regulatory priority. Ethanol faces other challenges, including restrictions on its use in older vehicles and state-level regulations, but lifting the seasonal restriction is the biggest factor in boosting sales, said Monte Shaw, executive director of the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association.

Many retailers won't sell E15 because they have to take it away during certain months, and sales don't easily recover when the fuel returns to the market after September, Shaw said. On the other hand, a growing number of retailers, including Sheetz and Kwik Fill, have offered it at some of their stations.

"This is far and away the biggest hurdle," Shaw said. "If we could fix this, then it's going to be up to market forces to move E15 into the market."